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# POEMS OF THE PLAINS.

BY

WILLIAM DARWIN CRABB.

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TO HER whose tender hand has touched to raise  
So many dying hopes, and not for praise ;  
Whose heart beats *friendship* for the throbbing  
*world,*

Yet *loves* but *one* always — whose heart is pearled  
With unpaid deeds of kindness ; and whose eyes  
Are half-way envied by the purest skies —  
Whose eyes have shone out on the cloudy ocean,  
On which, a-tossing with a wayward motion,  
My trembling bark of heart goes on its sailing —  
Have shone out, on the routless sea, unfailing,  
As magnet light-house lights that God has given  
To win, and light me, to the port of Heaven ;  
Whose life is pure, and sweet, and good, and  
great —  
To *her* these humble songs

*I DEDICATE.*



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## POEMS OF THE PLAINS.

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### WHY SING?

YOU smile and ask me why I sing?  
'Tis easier to sing than tell —  
I only know there is a string  
So superfine, its music brings  
A plaintive voice, on gifted wings,  
That tries to sweeten wormwood tears  
By memories of purer years —  
Impure so long, O Love! — Ah! well,  
At least, I still may wish and sing!

I only know a tender strain,  
Sent sweetly through my wayless night,  
Entrances me; and then I write  
And sing a yearning song again.

I only know a golden lyre  
Gleams yellowly, whose every wire  
Pours poetry along the glisten —  
That I stand riveted and listen;  
And then (*they say*) my hands I wring,  
And pour such pleading tears, and *sing*!

THUS AND SO.

FIVE lines would tell the most of tales  
Which tellers lengthen to a volume,  
Because we hesitate to name  
The word that holds the woe or shame,  
Or thought of death, or chilling wails, —  
The word that is the pith of all,  
The longest tale or bitterest story, —  
The word that, like a tilting column,  
Stands puncturing the purple sky  
Of one's sad life, — stands drear and tall  
Alone, none other standing by, —  
Colossal shaft of love and glory.

No wonder stories are not straight, —  
No wonder poets deviate,  
And hesitate, and stop and prate  
Of things outside what they relate,  
And seem to dread to stop and state  
The thought they circumnavigate.  
They wheel around and emulate,  
And over-tint, and over-rate

These outside beauties, as they wait ;  
Then finally submit to fate,  
And write the *line* that makes them *great*!

Men talk about “coherencies;”  
*Some* write upon another score,  
A better score ; for do not bees  
That wander, gather more of honey  
Than those coherent ones that hover  
Buzzing upon one flower forever ?  
And which is worth the most of money ?

Some call my songs “so unrefined !”  
Then say they “said it to be kind !”  
The first is true as mother’s kiss ;  
The second, like the coating ore  
Spread o’er the poorest kind of tin, —  
It shows the rust; it is “too thin,” —  
I know the world too well for this !  
Still I *forgive* and bear the pain ;  
For, of all that’s good and wise  
And beautiful beneath the skies,  
The only trace of Paradise  
Still left, is clustered in the bliss  
Of freely giving and *forgiving* —  
What else is worth the pain of living ?

But then straight lines are not the kind  
That follow out the natural train  
Of people's thoughts ; for men think more  
Than forty score of outside things,  
While they digest one song or story :  
And so the world should not complain,  
If I *could* gain the more of glory  
By reaching out to touch these strings,  
These outside strings, to wailing rings  
Or sad or sweet toned whisperings —  
These incoherent strings and springs —  
And send up songs with gifted wings  
To sound in melody sublime  
With what the main string plays to time.  
No song is sweet, or is a-gee  
Or sad, or wells up grand and great  
That is not shackleless and free.  
And so I enter my complaint  
Against restraint. I will not taint  
My song-child's cheeks with poison paints —  
It shall be what the heart brings forth :  
It shall be worth — what it *is worth* !

“WILD BILL.”

“WILD BILL ” and I ! and miles of Plains !

And one small solitary shade,  
A plum tree leaved in scarlet red !  
Some buffalo, so far it strains  
The eyes to look ! and spotted eggs  
Of prairie hens strewn here and there !  
And prairie fowls, with feathered legs,  
Fast panting in the evening air !

“ And so,” said I, “ you love this life  
Of struggles on the woodless West ? ”  
“ Wild Bill ” replied, “ Well, I could rest  
*Once* where was less of reckless strife.  
You see, sometimes, one makes a shot  
And misses ; then the game is done.  
In early life such was my lot —  
How long ago ! — shall I go on ?

" Well then ; my Mary was a blonde,  
A pale face mellowed by some care  
Unusual, so finely fair.  
And I, somehow, have never found  
A face, an eye, or sunny hair,  
A heart, or head, or limbs, or breast,  
Or love, or goodness could compare  
With hers, divinest, loveliest.

" And when she sang, or read, or spoke,  
Her slightest word, or shortest note  
Was milder than the mildest lute.  
They never cut, they never broke  
The happiness of any one.  
And every child and man and maid  
Looked up and loved her, as the sun  
Is loved by every flower and blade.

" And birds were thicker in the trees  
And sat and chattered unafraid,  
When she was there ; and, when she prayed.  
All Nature seemed upon its knees,

And rich bees, overladen, came  
And clustered on her claspèd hands,  
And tall-topt flowers, with hearts aflame,  
Tipped to her cheeks, as charmèd wands.

" Her song was like the melody  
Poured liquidly along the keys  
Of some piano in the skies —  
Like some angelic symphony,  
That glideth, on its wings of bliss,  
Along the glittering, glassy sea ;  
For nothing bears so pure a kiss  
Of Heaven, as music's melody.

" I mind me one time, when she sang  
And thousands listened wondering,  
As charmèd children look and cling  
And toss their happy hands and hang  
Upon a mother's tender song —  
I mind me yet how heaved her breast  
With something deeper and more strong  
Than many human hearts have pressed.

"Souls lifted with her lifting voice,  
While, shining with a glance divine,  
Her blue blue eyes did overshine  
The splendor of the sky a-poise.  
And bearded men look up and weep,  
And rough brown hands and brawny arms  
Lift up and swing, and young folks leap,  
As leaps her voice, and holds, and charms.

"And, as the tides rush to the moon,  
A thousand waking sympathies  
Rush up to kiss her melting eyes —  
And strong men, rising one by one,  
Unthinking, crowd and weep and lean  
Like leaning ships, and children shout  
And mingle in the magnet scene,  
While white-haired men bow heads devout!

"God gives but one such love as she,  
With such divinely gifted feet,  
With heart of such uncommon beat,  
Such bounden love and yet so free,

Though earth is full on every side  
 With many maidens true and false —  
 I feign, be sure, when in the tide,  
 To laugh with them, and shout, and waltz.

“ I ride fast on life’s path ; I pay  
 Too, as I go, some say, alas!  
 And recklessly I click the glass  
 And snatch their hands and laugh, and say :  
 ‘ Good-will ! good game ! ’ — What sayeth  
     *this ?* ”

(And here he struck his heaving breast.)

“ Ah ! wretches, how I hear them hiss  
 And spit their poison slander-pest !

“ Gold glittering garments, fold on fold,  
 That mantle false females, who smile  
 Like fallen angels, hiding guile,  
 Did ye but know what hearts ye hold ! —  
*Those slanderous tongues did murder her,*  
 Who stood so nearer Heaven, that she  
 Must reach far down to where they were —  
*This then is why I’m what you see !*

“ This was so long, O ! long ago ;  
And yet I see it as if near ;  
For, just as when the Plains are sere,  
We see a distant buffalo  
Stood off upon the highest hill,  
Far better than the nearer ones  
On lower ground, so, pale and still  
I see this all the moons and suns.

“ Then what if minted silver shine  
And rattle in the purse, and chink  
In chests chained down by diamond link ?  
What if the burden of a mine  
Of minted gold should pouch and weigh  
One’s pockets till the ‘ law ’ would pass  
And wink, and maidens droop and say,  
‘ How rich ! how grand ! — yet sad, alas ! ’

“ Then what of silver-glancing glint ?  
And what of gold and glowing gilt ?  
And palaces that tower and tilt  
O’er wide-spread lands afar a-tint

With harvest wealth — that tower a-top  
This little tilting toppling earth ?  
All these were but a trifling drop  
To satisfy a world of dearth.

“ For what were these, if one must miss  
The only face, the only form,  
The only breast and claspèd arm,  
The only elevating kiss,  
The only hand whose press or touch  
Could raise the dead heart, and arouse  
One slumbering joy, — the only such  
To heal the heart that bleeds and bows ?

“ The shadow of a face and form,  
The echo of a broken kiss,  
The coffin of a buried bliss,  
The phantom of a folding arm,  
Reflections of a Heaven-hid eye,  
The ‘ photo ’ of a trail of hair —  
*These* I have bound in one bouquet,  
And always at my bosom wear.

“ And this is more to me than all  
The world with all its glossy ore —  
And this sets nearer to the core  
Of life and heart, the ‘great in small.’  
It matters not how little it,  
For anyhow its silent bloom  
Leaves in my spirit scarce a whit  
Of one thing else an inch of room.

“ But still, I swear, accursed Defeat !  
I will not bow, I will not bend  
The knee to thee, I will not send  
A messenger — I, will not beat  
The gong of weakness — will not start  
A messenger ahead to shout  
Thy coming — will not lift apart  
A lip of wailing on my rout !

“ I hear thy tramp, I feel thy breath  
Blow poison in my face, I feel  
The chill air from thy daggered steel,  
I hear thee whispering, ‘ Death ! death ! ’ —

Stand back ! avaunt ! I was not born  
To give way at thy damnèd thrust !  
That I will slay thee I have sworn,  
Or drive thee as the wind drives dust !

“ What care I for the curse of fools ?  
Or if my creed be orthodox ?  
Since hearts of orthodox are rocks,  
Or flattery-fed and fawning tools.  
What if I see despisèd dolts,  
Whose hands I would not stoop to hold,  
Step up and lift the rusted bolts  
That open into rooms of gold ?

“ My heart is as the mighty tent,  
The canvass of a mighty show,  
Where fierce desires growl, crouching low,  
And surly lusts are barred and pent  
In chariots painted splendor-fair.  
(God keep them pent ! let loose, who knows  
What desolation and despair  
May follow where their raging goes !) —

"Where hopes, like gilt-clad tumblers toss  
And wheel and tumble in a ring,  
And circle in its dust, and sing,  
And marks of misery emboss  
By surface-shine, while all within  
Is sickness watching with the dead  
Automatons amid the din  
And dust and wild and weary tread !

"O red-winged life ! with bloody beak  
Scouring the wild plains of my heart  
To catch prey for the hungry mart  
Of misery ! I was not weak —  
I paid them for their godless sneers,  
No matter how — I made them feel  
The reflux of my youthful tears  
Drop back on them like frozen steel.

"I know not what may lie beyond ;  
I care not what may face me here —  
Of life or death I have no fear.  
I've built my heart-tomb massive-stoned ;

So, though my body never dies,  
Nor men, nor maids, nor fame, nor gold,  
Can look upon the placid eyes  
Of my heart's *Love* in dead white fold!"

A cloud, to east in upper air,  
Was dipping from the boiling sea  
Her golden waves. It bent its knee  
And dipped, and lifting, unaware,  
Some oversplashed its cup, and fell  
And flashed afar a lightning flash,  
And sounded with the distant swell  
Of thunder with its hoarse-toned plash.

And speckled prairie fowls arose  
In cackling swarms, and skimmed the sky—  
Made mimic thunder, passing by,  
With wings arched as the bend of bows;  
And meadow-larks closed their tender  
    strains  
To weep above the confined day,  
When muttering something of "the Plains"  
And "charity," he rode away.

IOLA.

IOLA blushed and dropped her head,  
And fondled my hand, and teased, and said :  
“ Now tell me the tale you used to, when  
I was a laughing girl, as then  
You told me, swinging over the gate,  
Forgetting the hour was growing late.”  
And so I smiled, as I raised her head,  
And chucked her under the chin, and said :

“ The Plains were as wide as the widest sea ;  
And the top was alive with a toss of glee  
The whole year through ; and the houses stood  
As few as ships on the ocean flood —  
'Twas *there* I dwelt with the bride whose eyes  
Were violet, black, nor the color of skies,  
But a beautiful color, nor wild, nor tame,  
A color that never has found a name.

The land was as broad as the broadest main  
Forever a-surge — Again and again  
The waves were green, with a painted foam ;  
And again and again, as the dry winds came

In the heated August, and the longing eye  
Saw never a cloud, in the flushing sky  
The size of a hand, has the green turned gray,  
And again and again has the gray grass spray,  
As the Indian summer sun looked down,  
Turned from a gray to a deader brown.

One time we stood and the stern round sun,  
When the east was red and the west was dun,  
Rose burning so hot that the grasses' spires  
With dew-tips tossing like tongues of fires,  
Strung off to the east as a caravan  
Of pilgrims clad in flame, and ran  
And swung their arms and, one by one,  
Seemed pouring into the templed sun.

Then, as the east was glowing red,  
The upper heavens turned dun and dead ;  
And, low in the west and pinned to land,  
Flowed up two strips of a rainbow band,  
And torn and bloody and blue, alack !  
And caught in a cloud of green-tinged black.

And ever then, as the bow shone brighter,  
The tint to the orient red grew lighter  
And less and less, as a dying crater,

And the green-tinged black grew darker and greater.

The wind kept stopping, then starting again,  
And looking a-west and pulling the rein  
To rest his steed till the cloud should come,  
When, spurring his steed in the stormy gloom,  
High over his tangled and dusty mane  
He would swing his hands and swoop the plain  
And shout and sing till the prairies ring  
And the frightened grasses drop and cling  
To the sounding ground a-quail with thunder! —

And then, as we looked, the sun went under.

‘Such a terrible sky, on a rain-bowed morning  
Is our, as well as a sailor’s warning!’  
She said, as she pressed her cheek to mine,  
And her chestnut hair did kiss and twine  
And mingle with mine. Now, clasping her,  
I shuddered to feel her bosom stir  
With a beat it never had beaten before.  
I looked in her face — a tear fell o’er  
My darling’s cheek! — for *she*, you know  
Was young as a girl, as yet, and so

I called her my 'darling' and 'girl,' 'tis true ;  
But you are older than she, and you  
Are prouder and bolder than she ; and I  
Somehow could never, I know not why,  
Call you the same as her — however,  
My love for you is strong as a river —  
And so, if I never should give you the name  
That I gave to her, it is all the same.

Then a terrible rush of wind came on,  
Whirling the dust, and then — was gone.  
Not a single mote of the world in motion ! —  
Still as a heart in last devotion !

The black o'er-head then flashed with fire —  
And the stillness startled as if a lyre,  
Whose wires hung spanning the universe,  
Were struck to mutter a mighty curse !  
The world awoke, with the pealing noise,  
And' startled and shook, as a mote, a-poise,  
Would shiver upon a quivering thread !  
Scarcely the stunning sound was dead,  
When the sudden rush of a fiery flood  
Streamed over the heavens. I started —  
stood ! —

And a burning bullet, a blazing ball,  
Shot down from the battery clouds, where wall  
On wall is set with cannon to war  
The world below — fell like a star —  
Flew red and swift, and a scented heat  
Followed the trail of its flashing feet !  
And, hissing by, as a heated dart,  
Its breath I feel — I cling — I start —  
But — never a breath again, and never  
Another word, from her lips forever !”

AH ! WELL !

HE, gazing on the ruined mound,  
Said to the group that gathered round :

“ I saddled, like an Indian brave,  
Our Indian ponies standing trim  
With feet entwisted in the wave  
Of wild grass breaking like a tide,  
Their eager eyes cast out, in pride,  
Into the distance, doubtful, dim.  
Our hopes were high — our loves were set  
With deeper hold than ever yet  
Were jewels in the massy gold —  
And thus high-hoped we mounted steeds.  
The first wheel, as they stirred the grass  
To motion with their prancing feet,  
They started from his coiling fold  
Beneath a shady clump of weeds,  
A rattle-snake, that rattled hoarse  
And lifted up his head to greet  
Us with his eyes of lead-like glass,  
And startled us from out our course.

“ We spurred, and, drawing tighter rein,  
Went dashing o’er the endless plain.

“ And then sometimes my fair one sung  
The sweetest and the purest song  
That ever flowed o’er human tongue.  
And as she sang, at times, I flung  
My hat into the air, and she  
Would catch and hand it back to me.  
This is one blessing that we bear  
With us upon the boundless plain :  
We are not held in the restrain  
Of customs that would cramp the free ;  
And so we sing or shout at will  
And gallop, with no thought of fear —  
We need suppress no single word  
Of love, to whisper, ‘ Hush, be still !  
Take care ! for we are overheard ! ’  
For all that roam upon the Plain  
Have charity, and so refrain  
From anything that tastes of blame —  
This is the blessing that we claim.  
O give me then my land of plain,

Where all is *as it is*, and this  
Is as God made it, with the kiss  
Of freshness and of purity!

“ We loved well in the selfish east,  
Loved well and warmly, still ‘ were wise,’  
Though others *said* not so, alas!  
They whispered what they *knew not*; we —  
Well, we ‘ *were* wise ’ — but let this pass —  
And so we came where love is love,  
Not bland formalities, or lies,  
Or simperings of soulless fools —  
Where *God* is judge of chastities —  
Where love is not a set of rules,  
That bind so tight and press so hard  
They press its sweetness all away —  
Where love is not a tight gold glove  
That ruins, while it hides, the hand,  
And leaves it cramped and cut and scarred.  
We too were riding in the sun,  
We two rode leisurely, as one —  
Rode on and sung, without a fear.  
One buffalo browsed on a hill

Four miles away, and yet seemed near —  
Now browsed, now looked as sentinel  
For some great herd beyond below.  
Blue-racers glided swift between,  
Parting the gray-tipt tides of green.  
Great bull-snakes dragged themselves away —  
And unwound blood-snakes, stretched out, lay  
Harmless in the shade of weeds.  
And now and then jack-rabbits ran  
Away from us with gaits and speeds,  
That made them seem as wild dwarf steeds.  
And wild fowls flutter up and fan  
The grass in eddies, as they go.  
But now as it drew on to noon  
I wished we never had begun  
The chase, the sun came down so hot.  
For, as I looked on her, I thought  
All was not right ; somehow the heat  
Fell down so like a fire-armed foe.  
Her queenly blood, with swifter beat,  
Kept bounding to her flushing cheek.  
Somehow I thought her clasp more weak  
Than when she clasped an hour ago,

And that her song, when then she sung,  
Was softer in its touch and tone.

“ Life is just such a race as this,  
Begins in love and balmy bliss,  
And ends in hot sun’s heat and hiss.  
Our hopes are scarcely well begun  
Before they end, and end amiss;  
And leave us, black-robed as a nun,  
To wish it never had been run.

Run slow, young boys and joyful girls;  
Or, ere aware, your flooding curls  
Will be thin white, or dull dead gray;  
And afternoon will be so short;  
And slower ones will come and say:  
‘ I knew ! I knew ! ’ weep and escort  
Your coffin to its cave of clay.  
Be boys and girls long as you may,  
And do not mind, if fast men mock  
And women sneer because you play.  
Haste not to lay your childhood by.  
It is a cooler, lighter cloak  
Than old ones wear — stay longer nigh

The hut door at the first of life.  
Young girl, haste not to be a wife.

“ Run slow, run slow, I say, run slow !  
The swifter run to heated noon,  
The shorter afternoon to run.  
Be boys and girls long as you can ;  
For, if you never leave your youth,  
You never need reach back your arms,  
In vain, for childhood's fleeing truth —  
Need not look back and weep and throw  
Out tackles after loved lost pasts —  
Tis nothing more to be a man  
Than this : to climb up broken masts  
And wrestle in the shrieking blasts,  
Cry chorus with the crashing thunder  
And roaring waters plunging under,  
And strike fists with the whirling storms,  
And then go down the sea at last  
And sink amid cold clutching forms,  
While young folks stand, and look, and  
wonder  
Why older lives are cloud o'ercast !

'Tis worse than this to be a woman.  
 Be all you can — be true — be human ;  
 But still be boys and girls, at least ;  
 For 'manhood' often means but 'beast' ;  
 And to be woman means — *to wed?* —  
 And wailings for the past and dead ?

" My young bright girl, with golden curl,  
 Men look on you and call you ' Pearl ' —  
 To still *be* ' pearl,' remain a girl.

. . . . .

" The sun grew hotter as it slid  
 Down from the centre to the west.  
 The sky above seemed concave steel  
 Reflecting all the heat to earth.  
 The hard red sun, the while he did  
 His way adown the curvèd sky,  
 Seemed striking fire anew, yet pressed  
 Swift onward, and a liquid fire  
 Seemed curling round his red-hot keel.

I looked up in her drooping eye  
 And needed no electric wire  
 To tell me we must wheel us back —  
 Re-run in haste, the forenoon's track.

“ Our canteen, swung to saddle horn,  
Grew lighter every mile we ran —  
Grew warmer every breath we took.  
Our faithful ponies' heads began  
To lower with their loss of speed ;  
For hot and tired, their heads were borne  
Less lordly than at early morn.  
My darling cast a pitying look  
Upon her pets, her prides, her steeds,  
And leaned and stroked their necks and wept  
And spoke a few kind words. They raised  
Their heads to hear her voice again —  
One moment only — then they fell.  
And still the dry sun hotter blazed.

“ Our canteen now swung like a bell,  
Rung, hollow drained, hung dry, and shone  
And tolled at every bound — and this  
Is why a bell-knell sounds so fell.

“ More languidly the steeds went on,  
Half stumbling by the clinging kiss  
Of sun-curled, dying blades of grass.

“She leaned on me — O! could I rest  
Her now upon my wayward breast! —  
She then pressed face to mine and yearned  
To say what — never has been said.  
I lifted up her falling head ;  
Mine nearer to *her* lips I pressed,  
That I might *feel* what thought did move  
Unheard, upon her lips of love —  
I held my breath! — she smiled and cast  
Her blue eyes up to heaven — they turned,  
From sweet blue eyes, to — *staring glass !*

“No wonder then I sit and tell  
*Myself* the story o’er and o’er —  
Stand looking from my humble door  
And watch the grass and sigh, ‘ *Ah ! Well !* ’ ”

WOLŞBIN.

'TIS sad to see the last leaves fall and float  
Off on the freezing stream to some broad  
bay

To mingle with the drift of many a boat,  
Shattered and tossing helpless night and day  
Upon its top-pitched swell ; 'tis sad to note  
The fade of twilight ; it is sad to lay  
The last sun-beam upon the couch of night,  
And know that, ere it wakes, some soul takes  
flight ;

'Tis sad, 'tis sad to see the last brown blade  
Of grass buried beneath the first white snow  
Of winter ; 'tis sad to hear, across the glade,  
The mellow song of some lone bird, and know  
That, when its plaintive dying notes shall fade  
To silence, 'tis the last ; 'tis sadder, though,  
To follow out the last friend — as a wave,  
A body, dead, afloat — to a silent grave !

Now there was left but *one* he called his friend,  
And she began to think she could not stand  
His loss of fortune ; so it put an end  
To her fond love, when once she heard his land  
Had scattered with his parents death. She  
penned

Wolsbin a heartless note, with the cold demand  
To meet her for a last “good-by” ; for the time  
Has come when to be poor is called a crime.

. . . . .

“ So I must go,” said he, “ I know not where.  
Perhaps the midnight noise of dance may float  
Over this stream unvisited and fair ;  
And, in the music’s wild sweep, you may note  
The muffled tread of feet that used to bear  
Up from the brink gay blossoms, while you  
wrote

And wove their beauty in impassioned thanks  
To heaven and me — wrote by these banks.

“ Perhaps the lonely lot of some wild rover  
May find me warring with the solitude  
Of ruined heart-hopes lying scattered over

The buried fields of trusting childhood's wood  
And plain, where we were wont to love and  
        hover

Around each other's wishes — where the flood  
Of thy gold hair was wont to pour and toy  
With dancing breezes leaping wild with joy.

“ Perhaps a bloated body, on the tide  
Of some soft-tinted sunset of the West,  
Unseen, unsaved, unwept, unknown, may ride  
A wave amid its sprayed and sparkling crest  
To that fair sighing shore, and lie undried  
Upon its silvery sands — then know the rest,  
That this dull head was tossed upon the billow  
Till lifeless left upon its watery pillow !

“ Perhaps we'll meet beyond the grave — how sad  
The uncertainty in that strange word *perhaps* !  
Perhaps ? the very thought would drive one  
        mad.

Such doubt, while looking in the future, wraps  
A sleety shroud upon the heart. O, had  
We surety we will meet again ! — But flaps

Still that uncertain leaf — Perhaps, then, we  
May walk with Christ upon the *crystal sea* !

“ You *tell* me these have been your happiest days,  
And that amid your dreariness, regret  
Will never pain you that our wandering ways  
Beneath the light of Heaven ever met,  
And that your heart still pants and prays  
For mine. You *say* those days throw round you  
yet,  
In golden fabric, all your youth’s bright hue.  
'Tis blotting out the sun — but still, *Adieu* !”

And so they parted, — he gone a-wandering  
And weary hearted, although ever striving  
To find another to fasten his meandering  
Mind, while Luella still kept eager driving  
Her new planned suit, her misturned life thus  
squandering  
On dreams of pelf, leading a way of living  
To rue when old. False God, demon of  
money,  
Whose temple is a hive of poisoned honey !

He thought : This life is but a crooked stream  
That hisseth slowly through the world's wide  
                    meadow ;

And worldly love is but an idle dream  
Afloat upon its surface, like a shadow.  
And then he turned and looked upon the gleam  
Of Mammon's temple — saw an Eldorado,  
He thought, lie spread beyond. So he redressed,  
And packed his trunk, and started for the West.

And where he was for two long years thereafter  
Nobody ever knew. At least he grew  
Immensely rich, so suddenly the rafter  
Of the old hut in his heart fell down for a new  
And stately mansion, which with feignèd laugh-  
                    ter

E'er echoed. Yet, though kept unseen, 'twas true  
His heart in those two busy years grew old.  
We find him now returning with his gold.

And, as he rode along the broad Missouri,  
He saw another engine rushing over  
On the other side — just as, beyond the worry

Of this fleet world, doffing our mortal cover,  
Landing beyond the river's turbid fury,  
When safe upon its new-found brink we hover  
A train from Heaven will take us to a lot  
In fields of Paradise — 'twas thus he thought.

. . . . .  
In the meantime when Wolsbin was at home,  
That is, what used to be his home, he heard  
Luella was unmarried still, and some  
Place o'er in Europe : and it was the word  
That she would set sail back in a week from  
Rome.

At this, of course, his heart was wildly stirred.  
And so he hastened to the sea to greet her  
Coming, and yet he scarcely dared to meet her.

And there he waited for the vessel bearing  
Her homeward, when the news came of a wreck ;  
That it had struck a hidden rock, while near-  
ing

A new-found land, and that the broken deck  
Whirled in a maelstrom, like a wind-tossed speck,  
And then shot down like lightning with the dead.

May God forgive him what his pale lips said !  
May men not hear it ! But enough, he wept  
A moment, then he sat and looked upon  
The waves, until a spell upon him crept.  
The ocean changed — he saw a lurking stone —  
A whizzing maelstrom just beyond it swept —  
He saw the powerless dizzy ship go down;  
Then — not a remnant of the wreck did float.  
May Heaven bless him for these lines he wrote :

“So here I am, homeless.    The brown leaves  
                                         flow

Over my weary head : and, while I kneel  
Upon this sand-shore, tears of woe  
Spoiling my cheeks, how well, too well, I feel,  
I feel — I know not what I feel ! — but O !  
When Heaven’s angel shall this sea unseal,  
May I not with her from her salt-wrapt grave  
Go forth ? and once more tell her I forgave ?”

He bent his knee upon the brinèd shore,  
Alone, except these memories and God —  
Knelt where the billows throw forevermore

Their storms of foam upon the filtering sod,  
And offered up a prayer — then rose and bore  
Away upon his heart the dreary load,  
The brine-bleached dead, the wayward loved  
white dead,  
And kissed her lifting hands, and breast, and  
head.

. . . . .  
He feigned full many a smile and many a laugh  
And far-fetched merriment and soulless glance,  
And strove to scatter with his friends the chaff  
Of levity, and laugh to see it dance  
In thoughtless joying ; and he strove to quaff  
The glass of glee, but there there lurked a trance,  
A curse that turned the liquid into foam :  
He drank its nothingness to the health of home.

And people called him cold : they did not see  
Beneath his gay and jewel-flashing coat,  
The painful throb — did not observe the tree  
On which his hopes hung crucified, nor note  
The crowns of thorns pressed in his heart. O !

we

Are cruel to the sorrowing world, and gloat  
Over our own small pains ! They called him  
cold,  
But knew not that his heart was gray and old !

“ This looking through the porthole of the tomb,”  
He said, “ this measuring one’s own ebon coffin,  
And carving one’s own tombstone in the gloom  
Of eve — this singing one’s own dirge, and often  
Sitting at twilight in this damp drear room ;  
This waiting for a broken heart to soften  
Its sorrow in the grave ; this fever to die —  
Would burn the last tear from the weary eye.

“ For, O ! Luella, though the world befriend,  
And strive to cover, with their garlands smiling,  
The hungry future, while the prairies lend  
Their gorgeous splendor, with their boiling  
In the wind, yet mourning fancy will but bend  
Down o’er thee lying in the sea, dead toiling  
With the waves — still memories of thee I ponder,  
Although broad roaming and as wild as yonder

“ Untamed bird sitting on the mountain pine,  
Which, solitary from its mount-top, flows  
Above the vale, which, like an emerald line,  
Wends round the base. The very wind that blows  
Reminds of thee — the very stars that shine  
Seem gleaming like thine eyes ; and dim seen  
bows

Of promise in the valley mists, seem bending  
Like those that used to arch thine eyes, and lend-  
ing

“ A lustre to their misty tears — and thus to  
wait

And wait for what will never, never be —  
Ah ! surely this is Time’s most cruel fate !  
But then, althro’ the flowers of mystery,  
And doubt, and fear, and pain, is not a straight  
And narrow way that leads up to the tree  
Of life, that blooms and gleams beneath the light  
Of Christ upon the holy mountain height ?

“ Who knows when parted once how long till  
met ?

This Sabbath evening, not an echo breaks  
The sombre quiet. Gold specks 'gin to fret  
The sky ; and now and then some glistening  
flakes

Of frost go softly floating by, then set  
Again, and melt into the little lake's  
Waves, like small stars gone down. So man  
floats on

A moment through this world, and then *is*  
*gone !* ”

“THE LONG-HAIRED BARBARIAN.”

WHAT unusual color of hair !  
What weight of hair on his shoulders  
square

And broad, and lifting bold, and clad  
In raiment as quaint and grand and old  
And rich as a king's in times old-told !  
And, when he was known on the Kansan plain,  
His foemen fancied his fold of hair,  
As he ran in the wind and they knew him mad,  
Shook as a furious lion's mane.

But now, as he sat on the shore a-sad,  
Receiving and believing the telegrams  
Come up through a quarter-hundred years,  
The storm of his hair did seem as the fair  
Falling folds of an orphan child's.

Stopping and dropping his cane on the sands,  
He turned and lifted his kingly hands,  
With rings as rich as that of the Pope,

And, looking into the trembling palms,  
 Followed the course of the cuts and mangled  
 Trenches over his palms, in hope  
 To trace to the place where, crossed and tan-  
                   gled —

Trace to the place, now near at hand,  
 Where the wayward lines shall have measured  
                   and spanned  
 His length of life. . . .

                                  “ Great God! what wilds  
 Of tossing and crossing forests, and places  
 Of fallen flowers and reaching grasses  
 And deserts, and places of skeleton faces!  
 What Godless struggles and foul grimaces  
 Of demons over the dead on the plains!  
 What blood-red rivers! how many a curse!  
 What crimes and frauds! what budless rods  
 Have lifted and smitten the rocks for gains —  
 Lifted, alas! commanded by gods,  
 But gods of evil — filling the purse,  
 But robbing the heart and heaven! Great God!  
 What a checkered and stained and sin-strewn  
                   course

These broken lines on my palms betoken !  
What marring and scarring and tears and  
blood ! ”

He said — when his will, so bold and oaken,  
Grappled his lips when this was spoken  
And snatched from their hold, so cruelly cold,  
Something about to set them a-trill —  
Snatched, and latched his lips lock still,  
Still as the lips of a god of gold,  
Of the golden image in Dura of old. . . . .

Then after a moment he lifted his head  
And mastered his will, and his lips unwed :  
“ ’Twas on the disorderly Kansan border  
I lived with *her* amid the disorder  
Of ruffian races, and struggled for order,  
And baffled the cunning of red-men running  
Wild as the winds, and baffled the shifting  
Cold winds of the winter, lifting and drifting  
Snow-winds of the weather, and baffled the  
cunning  
Of the hurricaned fire-fiend lapping and lifting.”  
He went on to say, growing warmer and bolder,  
One hand on his knee, in the sand and the sea

His cane free-fallen, like the trunk of a tree —  
One hand on his knee and one on my shoulder —

“ Our hut stood alone on the Kansan border,  
Stood long and lone in disorder and order,  
Where a river rolled by in a wonderful way.  
In high-water time, it swept to the door,  
While flowered floods of grasses broke up from  
behind —

The floods of wild grasses, whose waving sur-  
passes

This Mexican gulf for folding its masses.

When the river was low, it ruffled the reeds  
That grew in the stream, as the flowers and  
weeds

Are stirred in the grass with its waves unbrined,  
And the tides of the ocean of grass broke in  
spray

’Gainst the river, set along as a rock on a shore.

“ ’Twas a wonder the way the unusual bloom  
Was over and under every hollow and hill !  
It seemed to me then that the heavens shone  
brighter,

And seldom poured tears through the veils of a  
cloud.

It seemed to me then the few clouds lifted  
lighter

Their feet, in their march down the sky, as they  
fell.

It seemed to me too that the stars had more  
room

To play on the cheek of the night, when we  
bowed

Two hands full of flowers, and two full of  
hands,

Counting and recounting the days and the years  
We *had* loved and *might* love — four eyes full  
of tears

And of stars, twin stars flung afar from the  
skies.

“Flowers pillowed, afloat on the billows of  
grass,

Stemmed slender as willows and gaudy as glass  
Paned and stained with marvelous dyes,

Were twirled in the wind, as stars on high

Twirl over the billows of blue as they pass,

A whirl from the east and a wheel to the west,  
And play through the forests and gleam on the  
                  sands,

Then settle and set in the occident mist.

And there was our shrine ; and the bloom-spread  
                  sod

Knew more of the pressure of knees that were  
                  knelt

In simple devotion than many a shrine

In temples divine, gold-lettered ‘ To God ’ !

Those untamed blossoms have clung to her lips

And tipt, gay lipt, to her cheeks for hours —

This was our temple, and the stars were its  
                  towers.

“ And why I am here in the heat of the South,

Why a hard man speaks with a quivering  
                  mouth —

Why rich, yet alone on the wide world’s lea,

Can soon be learned, if you listen. — You see,

The wind all day, as a heated monsoon,

Swept up from the south. An occasional cloud

In the west, lay a-surge on the verge of the  
                  world,

Half gilded with gold and half hid in the smoke  
Of an Indian summer, that curled up and furled  
Its fold upon fold through the wold of the sky —  
Blew swift in the morning and swifter at noon ;  
And still when the sun stood bushing a-hover  
Over the placid Pacific ocean,  
As a fond one bowing with love’s devotion  
Over a tranquil slumbering lover,  
The wind blew prouder and louder a-loud.

“ Gray grasses of autumn arose in their bed,  
Tossed up in the wind, surged past, then broke  
Into eddies ; and dust to the wind was whirled,  
As spume is blown up from the ocean. . . .

And I  
Stood holding my chestnut-haired bride, as she  
shook

In my arms and shivered to see the sun set  
Blood-red, and the *wind not set with the sun !* —  
Threw her arms to my neck and her head to my  
breast,

Clung closer, and closer, and shook, as she said :  
‘ What if tribes to the south set fire out to-night ! ’

I quailed as she spoke of a fear, for she met  
Her God face to face, hence her thoughts were  
right.

“As I held her nearer, my fond heart yet  
Was regretting and fretting, when I turned my  
head,  
And, away to the moon there broke on my sight  
An image of light to the south and afar,  
A red gleam afar and the size of a star !  
And I knew 'twas the ‘photo’ of fire on the  
Plain.

• • • • • • • •

"She clung closer. . . .

The moon, hung half to the east,  
Seemed to stand in her track and look through  
the mist  
Of the smoke and the dust in distress on the  
fire,  
Now spread through the grasses and grown to a  
main,  
To an ocean of blaze running higher and  
nigher.

“ We flew to our boat, and over, in haste,  
We crossed the river, and, leaping a-shore  
On the leeward bank, we waited, a-quiver,  
To see if the water would be, as before,  
A stay to the fire. . . .

I held her again.

One place to the windward the river was narrow,  
Cut deep, but narrow, as a cañoned furrow;  
And a fire on the plains can leap like an arrow.  
As the fire came up to the narrowest place,  
She sprang from my arms, with a frightened  
face,

And, clutching the grasses, she cried, as she  
twined

Her hands in the grasses, and standing a-shiver,  
Pale-lipt and a-quiver, her face to the fire,  
With a plaintive voice, ‘ ’Tis over the river,  
And on from the river to us !’ Great Giver !  
It shot like a bridleless hurricane down,  
Down and upon us, hot and a-frown !

“ I ran to her rescue, my love, my crown.  
The wind was so high and the fire was so fast,

As it shot through the grass by the spur of the  
blast,

And on with the speed of a word on the wire,  
That my time seemed over; for the flames  
came on

With the speed of a chariot lightning drawn.  
The roar of red flames a-surge in the fray,  
And, filling the sky and a-fold in the winds,  
Black billows of ashes a-rolling behind.

‘ *Away!* ’ — too late — flames mad by the sway  
And lash of the gale pour over the way!

“ A cry from the midst of the fire-sea came,  
As a wailing afar from a wreck at sea —  
A tender cry from a pleading form!

While the weird wind, shrieking, and tossing,  
and whirling,

Kept beating and breaking on the fiery lea,  
On the red-hot maelstrom, that, twisting and  
twirling,

Eddied around her flame on flame!

And, lapping her round in a burning fold,  
A hot wave grappled her lifted arm,

And down, down in the blistering brine  
Hurled my *All* ! — I spare her name :  
But, whatever her name, I would give my gold  
And all that I am and all that I hold  
To hold her *now*, as I held her *then*.

“ Many summers ago, many moons in the past,  
The coffin was cut in which she was cast,  
On eternity’s sea — the beautiful dead —  
To the waves for the haven of heaven ahead.

“ Contented, storm-wet, I could set a-sail  
In the storms of the seas and a-pitch by the gale  
Winters and summers and time without end.  
Death dare to the deck, and bear all the lash  
Of the storm with its wheeling and whirling  
a-dash.

Look up to the sea-clouds, and cry, ‘ God send ’ !  
Could stand on the mountains and watch the  
wind blow

Up millions of flakes from the tempests of snow  
Into piles at my feet, with water-made sands  
Cutting crevices over my purple-pale face,

While I reach up my shivering white and blue  
hands

To warm them by sparks from the stars, as they  
blaze

Out of reach of the world ; — strike fists with the  
gale —

Bring blows to the snows, never quail, never  
wail ! —

Would ride in the desert that borders the Plain,  
Girted and skirted by the Plain-land grass,

With my Indian pony worn and a-stain

With blood from my face — a-stain on his  
mane

With blood, by the sand (in the hot-lunged  
gust)

That stingeth and clingeth, like pebbles of glass —

Brush my cheek on a cactus, with its arms in  
the sky,

In its garment of green, and the sun in its eye,  
Looming up and high over the sand-sea tide,

With its sun-boiling blood and mute and lone,  
Brotherless, sisterless child of the dust —

Fill my cheek with its prickles, while leaning  
to rein,

Till they sting like bees, as I reach and I ride.  
Great God! do anything earthly to hide  
That face and that form going down in the  
tide

Of grasses ablaze, as it passes, a main  
Driven on sweeping low and sky-high in the  
gust!

. . . . .

"You need more glitter, more gold, my friend;  
For wealth is castled and cold and binned —  
Hearts of rich are castled and thickened twice,  
And bastioned and battered well with ice;  
And so if you enter the shelter of castles —  
Enter without the semblance of vassals,  
Or slaves to the rich — you *must* have gold!  
Yes, I admit that Love is warm,  
And industry honest *once* baffled the storm,  
And charity melted the hearts of *old*;  
But somehow *these* scarce melt the cold  
Iced hearts of *this* age — so men *must* plunder

For gold, or open their eyes with wonder  
Why friendship is short as a clap of thunder.

“ You have proven a friend long and to the end  
(For the end is near), so take this gold,  
My large-heaped gold, and, before I die  
(For the end is nigh), I will double it thrice ;  
For, after *she* fell in the fold of flame,  
Not another man, or a child, or woman,  
Of all the millions, not a single human  
Ever offered the precious boon of the love  
Of a sister or brother or anything other  
Worthy my trust — nor ever yet strove  
To make me a brother *until you came.*

“ Christ ! what aileth the curvèd moon ?  
As she reaches up from the waves that wallow  
Over the Gulf, and hallo, and swallow  
The blind winds walking the Gulf, her arm,  
Uncovered and hovered over her head,  
Trembleth, stained a dusty red !  
Has she leaned on her arm to drink of a river  
Red with the blood of the mangled years  
Wailing and trailing the Plains of the past ?  
Or is it only the sign of a storm  
Of winds, such as once set tossing and crossing

The Plains and the whole with flames emboss-  
ing?

Or is it the sign that the end is nigh, —  
The end of the World ? *or the end of me ?* ’

Go back ! go down, red moon, in the sea,  
Go down ‘turned blood’ forever and ever !

Or, if ever your arched arm nears and rears  
Into the sky, let the languid eye  
Catch only a light with the old white pallor !  
Be anything else but a blood-red color !

“ O the gory days with their wailing numbers,  
And the fevered nights ; and the eye, that  
slumbers,

Watching a face forever and ever,  
And looking upon an arm that is crooking  
And folding, and holding a pleading lever  
To move one’s heart, and catching and hook-  
ing

The heart till the blood runs out in tears,  
Flooding the pillow ! O the huddled years,  
Huddled till all of the hills and hollows  
Crowd into a picture small, that follows

Forever the sweep of the eye in sleep  
 And the eye awake, till the strained eyes bleed !  
 And the ghost, that carries it, crying, ‘ Read  
 These hills and hollows rolled deed on deed !  
 Read on forever — *read and weep !* ’ ”

He leaned on me, and his heart did quiver  
 And flutter as frail as a floating feather.  
 ’Twas almost over. . . . .

A woman’s name

And a blessing fell from his lips together :  
 Then he said : “ Ah ! well ! it is all the same ;  
 For now I feel the force of a fever  
 That soon must settle this all forever ! ”  
 So saying, the man men thought so strong,  
 And cold, and hardened, sank to his knee,  
 Bowed down and wept, as a child would  
                     weep —

Poured out his spirit broken and bleeding  
 From the opened scars of his sinful years,  
 Blackened and scarred by deeds of wrong,  
 And lifted a yearning prayer with me :  
 And “ God is love,” so, hearing and heeding,

He sent his Son to the broken spirit,  
Who “washed it white,” and, just as the tears  
Were wiped from the penitent sinner’s eye,  
He smiled and sank to his deep sweet sleep !

FROM TEXAS TO CHILI.

I.

PARTING.

A SEA of dead grass on the plain,  
Whose ports are filled with withered  
flowers,

That rock upon the autumn tide,  
As unused vessels left to rot  
Upon the sea by sun and rain —  
Biographies the seasons wrote  
Of April, May, and June, which died —  
A dead sea of dead grass without !  
A dead sea of dead hopes within !  
And one new sea a-gleam like tin  
Beneath the sun, where I will float  
Aboard a ship for days of hours,  
Borne heavily amid the din  
Of new-cut memories, and shout !  
A girl with her disheveled hair

Aflow above the prairie flood,  
As the mantle of a trailing star  
Floats on the tide, lifts in the air,  
Along the surface of the sea —  
As golden clouds adrift afar  
Drift over on a flood of wood,  
Hands clasped upon her warm heart, lest  
Its swelling stir her eye-sea tide  
To overflowing, and her pride  
Forbids that this should ever be!  
A proud girl standing, like a queen,  
Some distance on the wharf from me,  
Unmindful of the busy crowds  
A-dash upon the wharf, like clouds  
Whirled in a whirlwind at the quay  
Up in the sky, where white ships lean  
And toss upon the upper lea  
Of seeming liquid, lunging glass!

Our ship stands motionless, as she,  
Where waters meet the floods of grass.  
Would it were fixed by bars of brass,  
So firmly to the land, that I

Could stand forever on the deck  
And hear the plashing waters fall,  
Forever sounding, fall and break,  
And watch her stand so still and tall,  
With such a heart-hid, burdening wreck,  
Borne silently within through all  
Her years of cold and cloudy sky —  
Watch her stand waiting for our flag  
To clasp hands with the double blue  
Of sky and ocean mingling dew —  
Stand waiting for our ship to drag  
Slow down the sea-hill out of view,  
To hide forever ship and crew ! —

Lo ! Suddenly our sail a-furl,  
And suddenly the sea a-whirl  
Up under a light trembling-keel,  
To seaward too a ship a-wheel !  
A shout of glee and wail of woe,  
Discordant winging o'er the waves ;  
And eyes wet at foreboding thought  
Of salted and unsodded graves ;  
Disdainful turnings on the heel ;

And smiles spread over bursting breasts,  
Hearts breaking, as the breaking crests  
Of waves upon the speechless shore ;  
And arms held up to God to know  
If glad return will be the lot  
Of *him* or *her* ; and heads of hoar  
Nodding adieu to early years;  
And maidens walking to and fro ;  
And children wondering at the scene ;  
And — A watery way has come between  
Our vessel and Our land ! Our sails  
Set seaward to its suns and gales !

One stood alone upon the rim  
Of land and sea, and hummed a hymn  
Unmeasured and unthought — one stood  
And struggled with her rising blood.  
I watched her from the rocking ship —  
Her standing with her bitten lip.  
The land went gliding down the sea ;  
Still stood she, half-way in the flood.  
Her thin, pale hands, did seem to dip  
And dangle in the waves, as she

*Seemed* walking deeper in the deep,  
Until the waters seem to beat  
And break upon her heaving breast  
And drop their foam upon her hair,  
Like white flowers falling in the heat —  
And still she stood and *would not weep*.  
Then she was hid by wild unrest  
Of waves grown bolder and more wild,  
Until they dared to lift and bear  
A flood between me and this child.

The sea-surged ship began to reel  
So drunkenly, it made me kneel  
Upon the spume-spread deck and pray,  
“God pilot us upon our way!”  
And, kneeling with my head a whirl,  
There, suddenly, upon the sea,  
Hands clasped upon her breast, and feet  
Well whitened by the foam and fleet,  
*Seemed* following that blue-eyed girl  
And leaning tenderly to me.  
Ah! had she looked such fond desire  
And had she leaned thus tenderly  
A day ago, I would not be

Now striving hard to quench this fire  
By dashing through this dangerous tide.  
I saw a *moment*, then she fell  
And vanished by the vessel's side.  
Forgetting I was far afloat,  
Forgetting this but *seemed* to be,  
I started from my knees and cried :  
“ God, lift her from the sea ! ” — Ah ! well !

The last and highest swell of land  
Seems lying, as the merest mote,  
Scarce visible from where I stand.  
Now, young Past, standing on the shore,  
Shake farewell hands across the wave  
With dim seen Future, and the grave  
Let close above thee evermore.  
Let “ farewell ! ” be for aye and aye.

Lift up your new flag high on high  
And shout, my memory, “ You and I  
Will stay no longer with the dead ! ”  
Kiss quick, Past's pale and purple lip,  
Turn on your heel and head your ship  
Far to the southwest — dash ahead !

## II.

## A-SAIL.

Farewell, pale Past and land of grass !  
Eternally farewell to you,  
My high-bred girl ! and, sky of glass,  
Long everlastingly adieu !

No wormwood tastes so bitterly  
As wormwood taken in the still  
Of meditation, when the eye  
Has lost sight of the eye a-swim  
With farewells filling to the brim,  
When lips, a-touch to lips a-chill,  
Are parted, and when chins do trill  
And tremble after one is gone,  
And when the face, now left afar,  
Seems looking into yours, and one  
Roams mateless, as a last, lone star.  
To kiss a hasty, hot adieu,  
Is bitter, but not like the kiss  
(For kisses are not always bliss),

Of meditating memory.  
To eager hold a long-loved hand  
In parting on a barren strand  
For sailing on the billowy blue  
Can scarcely leave an eye-lid dry ;  
But when the hands hang by the side,  
Or reach out through the bitter years,  
Until they grow so thin and pale  
By drenching in the salted tide  
Of flowing, but unebbing, tears,  
'Tis *then* the drifting heart is tried,  
And lifted hands droop white and frail.  
When looping arms reach round and cling,  
Embracing in a sad farewell,  
And breast, pressed passionate to breast,  
Heaves heavy, while adieus are said,  
By pouring heart hot into heart,  
As mingled waters, ' bitter-sweet,'  
Poured noiselessly from spring to spring—  
Ah ! breasts *thus* passionately pressed  
Could never utter half, nor tell  
The number of the sheeted dead ;  
Still rueful as *this* is, yet this

Is mingled with a taste of bliss  
Beside the wormwood when apart  
And reaching out to draw and kiss  
A fleshless form of nothingness  
Forever on the weary waste  
Of sweltering sea, or burning land —  
Forever reaching empty-hand :  
The former is as wind-made wave  
Run o'er the surface of the sea ;  
The latter as an earthquake swell  
That stirs the deep sea in its grave,  
Awaking the sea-buried dead,  
Who sit up in their quaking bed  
Repeating sad the history  
Of youth, and love, and fare-thee-well.

The sun, a set of blazing gold,  
A breast-pin lying heaving hot  
Upon the bosom of the sea,  
At length was lost behind a fold  
Of Ocean's dark and waving dress  
A-fringe with foam, as maidens' purl  
Their garments with pure white and light.

This Ocean's foam-locks tossing free,  
Winds mildly lifting every tress  
So spotless and so pure of sin,  
This Ocean's bosom heaving white,  
Does make me seem to see afar,  
By lamp-light of the evening star,  
The bosom of a high-bred girl  
Breathe fitfully, her hands held hard  
Above, as golden locket's lids,  
To hide the lone keep-sake within.  
A girl who, unmoved, stood and barred  
Her sympathies, amid the din  
Of partings on the distant quay —  
I wonder if, since I am gone,  
She sometimes sets the door ajar,  
And, standing on the wet wharf, bids ;  
Her feelings to the reverie !  
And wishes what she said to me  
Were farther off than where I am,  
And I were there where it was said ;  
And wishes, bitterly, undone  
What's done, and recollection dead !

The sky hangs mellowly and calm  
And listens to the ceaseless psalm  
That floats up from the devout flood,  
Day and night, a hymn to God.  
The moon, arisen in new birth,  
Is held up to the arching lea  
By holding to the starry girth  
Of white, gold-studded, milky-way,  
Which belts the blue and bastioned sky  
And buttons it down to the Earth.  
No wonder, if the heart does melt  
To feelings all before unfelt,  
Afloat beneath a scene like this,  
Such mellow quiet tenderness.  
The waves come up against our ship,  
And kiss it with a trembling lip.  
So gentle is the blue and green  
Soul of the sea, that only the spars,  
Only the tip-top seems to tip  
So slightly to the tipping stars.  
The only thing that meets my eye,  
That is not mild, from sea to sky,  
Is, off to east beneath the moon,

The reaching of the troubled tide ;  
And, on its crest, white sea-froth shines  
As snow-spread tops of wind-stirred pines  
Upon a mountain-tide of land,  
Or white-robed dead late deified  
That Christ-like on the billows stand  
Unsinking, glorified, and grand.  
And *this* even is a far-off boon ;  
For, O my God ! this moonlight *still*  
Is harder and would quicker kill,  
Than farewells on a barren strand !  
The silent pain unnerved my will.  
I started, as if from a swoon,  
And clasped my cold hand to my head,  
Grown gray by fine fallen flakes of foam  
And dampened by a night of dew,  
And cried : “ My God, take up this dead,  
Like Moses, to an unknown tomb !  
Darken this calm and silent blue !  
Set boiling this sad dreaming sea !  
The roar, the rack of storm and gale,  
A lunging ship, a tattered sail,  
A torn flag dragging in the ocean,

An hundred people shrieking, pale,  
And seeking safety in devotion,  
Were far more bearable by me !”

---

I broke this painful reverie  
Only when night broke for the day,  
And the vessel, which all night long lay  
So timidly upon the wave,  
Began its rocking in the breeze :  
And then my heart, grown over brave,  
Laughed loudly, shouted, sang with ease :  
“The Past *is* in an unknown grave !”

### III.

#### A—SHORE.

A cloud afire, a rich red bar,  
Stretching over a setting sun,  
A yellow coin of burning gold  
Tossed on the table of the sea !  
The Andes looming up afar,

Upon whose shining face a stone  
Has caught the image of a star  
Pale, trembling at the sinking sun !  
A flood of orange sunset, run  
Unhardened from a vesper mould,  
Floods South American Italy !  
And Chili's peaks and gorgeous strand  
Are swimming in this glorious hue.  
Hail ! serene sea and luring land !  
Hail ! lifting peaks, who pin the blue  
And hold it bended over you !  
Hail ! home of condors floating high  
And drifting through the tidal sky.  
High-handed mountains raised to grasp  
The heaven-high drifts of snows, to clasp  
Them to your heated breasts, hail ! hail !  
Strange land, shout welcome to our sail !

The sun is down ; the sail is up  
And bowing to the blooming shore ;  
And we, ashore, stand charmed and sup  
The breezes of the balmiest sea  
And balmiest fields that ever bore  
Free vessels and the shouts of *free*.

## " RETRORSUM.

The wharf built by the land of grass  
So many hundred miles away!  
I wonder if that proud girl stands  
Unweeping 'neath the sky of glass,  
Or if she weeps and wrings her hands!

Take hold my hand, take hold my heart  
My Chilian land, and be my spouse,  
My land of plain and I will part;  
Nor let thy warm unwailing sea  
Forever and forever rouse  
That distant, dimming memory,  
*That tearless girl's last look to me.*

## “GROWING OLD.”

BY MISS FADING FLIRT.

I TAKE the Bible, from the shelf  
And o'er the “Record ” pore and pore  
And read it over to myself,  
“ Was born in eighteen-forty-four ! ”  
I would not utter it aloud —  
No, not for all my father's gold —  
Still will the thought upon me crowd,  
“ I'm growing old ! ”

I looked into the glass to-night.  
I noticed little veins of *blue*  
Stood out upon my brow of *white* —  
I mused — “ Alas ! then this is true,  
My face has not a sign of *red* ! ”  
And yet my heart is hardly bold  
Enough to say, what *might* be said,  
“ I'm growing old ! ”

“ *They* ” only come now “ as a friend ”  
And sit upon the farthest chair.  
They’re careful now not to offend (!)  
By mentioning that I am fair,  
Or venturing to press my hand.  
Are not so “ rude ” as to enfold  
Their arms about me, as I stand —  
Ah ! — growing old !

They talk of politics and money,  
The ones that used to talk of “ love ”  
And “ luscious lips as sweet as honey,”  
And say, “ Come nestle near, my dove !  
They “ wonder why I do not wed,”  
Yet never “ *offer* ” — O ! how cold !  
They *mean*, by this, I am afraid,  
“ You’re growing old ! ”

I thought I heard two saucy girls  
Say, as they passed the other day,  
“ Of late her boasted flood of curls  
Is growing thin — well, that ’s the way ! ”

It's true; for, when I comb my hair,  
The comb fills full as it can hold.  
I almost cry out in despair,  
“I'm growing old!”

One time my hands were pigeon-breasted —  
How fondly then they used to kiss them!  
How many tears upon them rested!  
But *now* somehow they never miss them.  
Instead of dimples now are knuckles,  
And Charlie, who *once* came to hold  
Them fondly, stays away and chuckles,  
“She's growing old!”

O William, with your “little ones!”  
O Charlie, with your smiling eyes,  
Two stars now sparkled into suns!  
O many others, whose “good-bys”  
Each left upon my heart the trace  
Of fleeting years! you say, I'm told,  
I dare not look you in the face,  
Since growing old!

The *mothers* call upon me now,  
And ministers, to sympathize  
And point me to the “promise bow” (!) —  
“You’re pale,” they say, with scores of  
“whys?”

O me! they know, as well as I,  
My color in my youth was sold,  
And that the only reason why  
Is “growing old!”

I see my face is growing thin;  
I see my lips have lost their red;  
I’ve lost the dimple on my chin  
And half the hair upon my head.  
I’m growing prudish in my notions;  
I fear I’m growing to “a scold;”  
I’m growing angular in motions —  
“I’m growing old.”

I see the maidens in the street  
Smile, as I pass them of a morn.  
Men have quit gazing at my feet;  
And bachelors now say, “Forlorn!”

That used to call me "young and green."

Sometimes they say, "*Old maid*," I'm told,  
And, "Growing pious, growing lean,  
And growing old!"

I gave my younger, sweeter life,  
To witcheries and smiles and lies,  
And frightened at the thought of "wife" —  
My *older* life I give to sighs.  
I look back to my warmer days,  
Now that my heart is growing cold,  
And sigh, "*Flirtation never pays,*  
*When we are old!*"

EDGAR A. POE.

I.

**W**EIRD meteor of a doleful dye  
Thus flaming in a gloomy sky,  
As wayward as the comet wild,  
Thou strange, romantic, unknown child,  
A bust of deep unearthly woe,  
Mysterious, morbid, dreamy Poe !

II.

Lamented be the day that found  
Thy storm-swept vessel rockward bound,  
And doubly cursed the fatal day,  
When thy lone life-boat shattered lay,  
In floating fragments, o'er the sea ! —  
A mournful loss, when Heaven lost thee

III.

Thou wast an angel strayed to earth,  
Thy voice commingling in the mirth,

And dreaming, not of gloom, but joy,  
And heaven, and beauty, fair-haired boy.  
But, “*Fallen!*” what a word of wail!  
What ranks of misery crowd its trail!

## VI.

Who knows the swelling veins of gall  
That burst thy soul, when thou didst fall?  
Who knows the quenchless flame that fired —  
Consumed thy peace and then expired,  
Leaving the evil all unburned —  
The ashes of thy soul un-urned?

### THREE WRECKS.

A WRECK in the blue of the heaven,  
Wreck of a billowy cloud —  
Cloud-waifs that are drifting and driven,  
Shreds of a cloud-ship shroud !  
The trail of a midnight comet  
Caught in the spar of a cloud !

Stars in their raiment of yellow,  
Floating a-top of the waves —  
A-top of the high blue billow  
Dashing up over the graves  
Of the crew of the stranded vessel,  
The cloud-ship that broke on the waves !

A glimmer of twilight waiting  
The roll of blue waves to their strand,  
With waifs and a starry freighting  
To crush it down into the sand,  
To hurry this remnant of twilight  
To the sky-shore and dash it a-strand !

The face of the moon on a pillow  
Of blue encased in the foam  
Of a white cloud stitched to the billow —  
Cold face, pale face in the spume,  
And dumb and afloat as a corpse's  
Asleep on the sea and its foam !

A hum of the fall of river  
That sounds like the flutter of wings  
Of a bird in the sky, and ever  
Its measure is sad, as it sings !  
A rainbow of white in the heavens,  
Drooped down from the centre as wings,

The milk-white way, for the roaming  
Of strange stars treading the way —  
For those that come up from the foaming  
To East and go down in the spray  
That breaks on the walls of a city,  
Where they rest through the lustre of day !

Now and then one flashing and falling  
Down from the highway, as a life !

Voices of "far-off" calling !  
Sparks from a memory rife !  
A pale face pressing a window,  
Lips blue as the lips of her life !

Lips folding the name of a lover !  
Heart dead as a heart-dead tree !  
Tears catching the purple above her  
And the dead-faced moon, maybe,  
And painting them into a picture  
Of a tide-tossed face on the sea !

Thin hands in the moonlight folding  
Bitterly over a breast,  
Clasping them over, as holding  
Her own sad history prest  
Alone to a pitiful bosom,  
Alone to a blighted breast !

A sky, like a sea, in motion,  
The wreck of a cloud o'erhead !  
A sail a-trail in the ocean,  
Spars bowing above the dead !

A wreck in the heart of a maiden,  
No wonder her face is sad ! —

No wonder the red cheek blanches ;  
No wonder the lips are thin ;  
No wonder a tear-tide drenches  
Her face ; no wonder the din  
Of a storm, and a wreck, and a sea-wail,  
Is stirring her heart within,  
At a scene like this ; no wonder  
She leans with a trembling chin,  
Her wan face pressing the window ;  
No wonder her lips are thin !

## A BOOK.

**R**EALITIES must have an end ;  
And dreams flee faster than the real ;  
And hearts are histories that blend  
The sad, the sweet, the false, the true,  
Regrets, with satisfactions few —  
The pen that writes is frosted steel,

And many-colored is the ink.  
One line penned whiter than the page,  
And pointed with its points of pink,  
The symbols of the pure and weak —  
The blue, the true, the black, the bleak :  
The purple cold in death and age.

The line of blurred and blotted red,  
The dripping blood of violence :  
The gift of gold writes one has wed  
The show of wealth ; the silver touch

Tells of the dead ones, tells where such  
In Heaven pitch their shining tents !

And I have turned this blended book  
Till I have found the silvered line ;  
And so I read which way to look  
Devoutly to her shining tent —  
And sometimes, when the veil is rent,  
She listens, while I call her *Mine*.

## INDIAN SUMMER ON THE PLAINS.

**G**RASS ! grass ! plashing, plashing under the  
hollow glass

Held, hung, and hollowed over the world of  
grass !

Sky of glass, palm of the hand of God on high !

Grass and sky under and over, filling the world  
and eye !

Space ! space ! and never a sign and never a  
single trace

Of fallen cities, or where a tyrant has set his  
face !

Far, far away look at a setting star,

With never a forest, nor even a single spar,

Far, far a-reach from a single tree to mar

The streaming light — to throw on the face a  
bar !

Flowers ! flowers ! taller, grander, standing  
above as towers

Over a roof of green ! — Now falling their leaves  
in showers.

Bloom ! bloom ! fading, falling, falling away in  
gloom !

Green ! green ! falling away, going down to a  
tomb !

Roof ! roof of green wrought in wonderful woof  
Over the world as a temple, *you* wrought as a  
roof ;

Flowers, as towers, now that the crisping hours  
Come, temple, towers, *all* fading, falling your  
powers !

Stand ! stand ! gray, brown, dead as a withered  
hand,

Gray as a ruined temple in an old and fabled  
land !

Gales ! gales ! swift running and whirling ! wails  
Sounding from under the chariot wheels ! gales  
Whirling the dust, tossing the grass, flapping  
the veils —

Veils ! veils of Indian summer smoke walking  
the air with trails !

Red ! red light of the sun — face of the moon  
o'erspread !

Redder than anything living, redder than anything dead,

Red in the struggle of death, neither living nor dead —

*This is Indian summer* — red, painfully red!

## SAILOR'S FAREWELL.

I DID not think yours was the hand,  
Clung as it was, to loose so soon —  
Your love the tender guiding moon,  
Bright in my night, to stop and stand  
Half way to noon and fade and dim  
And leave me in the voiceless gloom,  
Stand trembling on the narrow rim,  
That circles an eternal tomb.

Hard as this is, I yield — Farewell !  
There are times when the boasted will  
Stands like a dead man in the still ;  
And this is one, when lovers tell  
The last love-beads, and blur and blot,  
By blood-lined tears, life's young white page.  
But go — and hope that yet this thought  
May dim by dust and din of age !

The heart is not a cup of steel :  
I cannot keep this keen-edged word  
From cutting, though a brilliant bird  
Sings loud its melody of weal,  
And flutters joyous on the sea,  
And specks it with the foam a-shine —  
It is the same, or worse to me,  
Its song but saddens the repine.

This shore to leave I would be loath,  
Were we but one still, as before,  
Our voices tangling in the roar  
Of ocean in his fur of froth,  
Somehow I see his whitened rim  
Seem reaching up between us two,  
And waves loop round me limb to limb,  
And bear me swift away from you.

Would this were o'er, and we afar !  
And yet my heart does bleed to know,  
O God, how soon this will be so.  
When I am gone, hold, like a spar,

Your hand high o'er your head to mark  
The ruin and the wreck below,  
Your strugglings in the stormy dark —  
Call me, and I will come to you.

I know we two, apart, will kneel,  
Instead of knee to knee, as now,  
When years, and miles, and tears, and woe  
As thirsting caravan will reel  
Between us on a desert way —  
Will kneel and listen to the sea  
In murmured prayer — will kneel and pray  
For what can never, never be.

'Tis hard to know one is alone ;  
Yet drear as 'tis, I will not miss  
The clasp, and smile, and sacred kiss,  
More than thou wilt, and not more prone  
Will trail upon my troubling breast  
The leaves and bloom that love has grown,  
Than they, so pale and deathly dressed,  
Will lean low on thy trembling own.

No less will days be desolate,  
With corpses and a burial rite.  
I bear henceforth one lifelong night —  
For days *are* nights, at least I rate  
Them shadows of my former days —  
No whit less desolate and dead  
Than thine, nor song-full, bloom-full Mays  
Can lighten long their sombre tread.

But go — and hope this lonesome knell  
May drown in noise of years ! Is this,  
My God ! the fruit of flowering kiss ?  
Is this the end of bliss ? “ Farewell ! ”  
Such is not much, yet it does fill  
More eyes brimfull of bitternesses,  
Yet it more lips does blue and chill  
Than graves and death — white more gold  
tresses !

We pass fast on life's bustling way,  
Pass running, and, with ruth, alas !  
Reach left and right to those we pass,  
And reckless shake fair hands and say,

“ Farewell ; farewell ! ” until we grasp  
Some hand that draws us lip to lip ;  
*Then*, when we start and break *this* clasp,  
Two hearts break with the breaking grip.

I did not think yours was the hand  
To stop me, in my rush to wake  
This charming song so soon to break  
In measured wails — to leave unmanned  
Two ships to toss on sunless sea ! —  
Unclasped, ungripped from those we woo,  
Hands shake less warmly, after we  
Have torn them from the tender true !

The world is wild, and teeming wide  
With motley millions true and false.  
Rush in amid their shout and waltz —  
Nod sadly to the medley tide  
Of youth and age ; the half, maybe,  
Have clasped hands once too often, too !  
And should you see two, knee to knee,  
Weep not that 'tis not me and you.

For lips must touch but to untouch ;  
And breast hugs breast, and trembles glad  
But to be left unclasped and sad ;  
And parting hands are left to clutch  
At shadows, always empty-hand ;  
And eyes with love-light shine and burn  
But to be turned to tears — so stand  
And say : “ Farewell ! ” and do not mourn !

God never gives but one like thee  
To wander, with thy bleeding feet,  
A time amid the cold and heat,  
And lead one on, as you have me.  
Farewell ! and should a troubled keel  
Toss up in view, and should you hear  
Sometime a sea-wail — should you kneel  
Then on this shore, pray weep no tear  
Because you cannot kneel more near  
Me tossing on that wheeling ship —  
And, should you see me reach and reel,  
Let no lament lift purpling lip !

## LIFE IN DEATH.

A LONE green tree amid the dead,  
A lone flower on a lone green tree,  
Blue blossom gleaming overhead,  
And bluer than a blue-bell's blue,  
And vying with the spotless hue  
Of May skies melting to a sea !

Leaves leaning to the lisping stream,  
Limbs clasping to the tender breeze,  
Shells painted pure and rich-hued cream !  
Blue bloom now turned up to the sky,  
Now gazing with its golden eye  
On shadows bended to their knees !

These shadows circling round me, knelt,  
Seem so like voiceless angels, till  
Their sainted tendernesses melt  
And flood my spirit like a balm.  
They kneel, they kiss me in the calm,  
And woo to worship in the still.

Green grasses with a touch of blue,  
Calm blades that tread with tufted feet,  
That, arm in arm and two by two,  
Seem, moving in the mellow shade,  
To woo with whispers, so afraid  
To break the peace so sad, yet sweet.

This live spot 'mid the soulless dead,  
This still life hath its counterpart,  
A history unwrit, unsaid,  
Save only what the pen of God  
Has written on the silent sod  
Of sod-bloomed graves within a heart.

This stately 'beauty-bearing tree  
Is as the symbol of a life.  
That one blue blossom seems to me,  
So purer than the sinless sky,  
The symbol of a sweet fond eye  
Which calls up recollections rife.

## THE GARDEN WAY.

### I.

THIS world's a great fair flower-garden spot  
That lies along a "ghastly rapid river"  
Called Death; and, on the other bank, the lot  
Of Heaven, high broad plateau, lies gleaming  
ever,  
Whose shining leaves eternal wither not;  
And in the dismal mist, stands reaching over  
This stream a damp drear bridge, and named  
the Tomb,  
A crossing on the Christian's highway home.

### II.

This highway is a straight and narrow road  
Through Earth's flower beds, o'er the bridge, and  
up to rest.  
Away back from the river's deathly flood  
We, young and easily wrong impressed,

Begin our trial journey up toward God.  
This blooming Garden, in its glory dressed,  
Is hedged with trees of mystery, that drop  
Their lightless blossoms from their dusky top.

## III.

First, here's a bed of Doubts that creep and feel  
About the ground, and o'er it weave and tangle  
How, at the silent eloquent appeal  
That glistens from a thousand flowers that  
    dangle  
Amid their wet work, does the feeling steal  
On us to go and pluck some curious spangle !  
Stay out : for once amid this twining host  
Of doubts, your feet are caught, and all is lost !

## IV.

And, O ! the gorgeous splendor of this bed  
Of pleasure-posies ! How they shimmer,  
    twinkle,  
How beckon with each sparkling, nodding head !  
Their witching, silvery, golden, diamond tinkle

Calls, "Come !" And how her lolling beauties  
plead

"Come in !" — Go not ; for stinging nettles  
crinkle

Beneath these flowers, thick and matted. When  
The gar'dner comes to gather them, mark, *then* —

v.

He'll drive you 'mid the leaves of punishment  
That rustle in the bitter vale of Pain ! —

And here 's a bed of Hopes, but ah ! how blent  
With flowers of fear so pale and crisped by  
blain !

*These* are uncertainties, whose flowers, top-bent,  
Keep tossing, bowing, lifting, and, in vain,  
Reaching for something never found to clasp.  
Go not to pluck their bloom — withhold thy  
grasp !

vi.

Go not among their restless stalks, to let  
Them blind you, with their endless, curséd toss-  
ing.

Keep straight ahead, till at the parapet  
That leads you to the river's gloomy crossing ;  
Then close your weary eyes without regret,  
Lay hands in Christ's, who'll lead you crossing  
Beyond, where death nor sorrow ever dares  
To enter, "and God shall wipe away all tears!"

## MOTHER, PRAY!

I SIT and sing the cheerless song  
That I have sung so many years, —  
A song that has no hope. How long  
Before to-night, since any tears  
Have bathed the fever of my eye!  
O, me! my very heart will break!  
For, though I kneel so low and try,  
I cannot pray. Then let me cry  
The night away, and let me take  
My tears to *her*, for *she* can pray.  
How many nights of storm and calm  
Now has she pointed out the way.  
Still, when she prays, God hears my name —  
I cannot pray; then let me go  
And give my tears to her; I know  
That she would clasp her hands, and bow  
With sweetened tears to know that I  
Can *even weep* and *wish* to pray.  
O mother, let me come and lay

My yearning tears upon thy prayer,  
To wing them Home, and kindly near  
And pour them in the hand of God,  
That He may know I kneel and try  
To say a prayer, and "kiss the rod!" . . . .  
What tender voice runs on the air ?  
O mother, 'tis his words I hear ;  
"We own thy tear," I hear Him say,  
"And let thee pray!" . .

I pray ! I pray !

ESTHER.

ESTHER, the light sun lingers  
And works with his gilded fingers  
In the tops of the trees,  
Under and over tangling  
His silken rays,  
With broken ravelings spangling  
The breeze.

Esther, the sun with gilt fingers,  
That works in the tree-tops, lingers  
Where I can see,  
But never can feel, his glory ;  
And so of thee  
The “ dim-remembered story ”  
*Unfelt I see!*

ELLEN.

BACK years, many years in the distance,  
Where the sea of the past in the far-off  
Clasps hands with my life-sky of purple,  
Forever I see, by the foaming,  
Her feet in the pebbles of sea-shells,  
Her hair in the hands of the sea-breeze,  
Her lips in the kiss of the sea-surf  
And her violet eyes in a tear-tide —  
Forever I see, by the foaming,  
A memory fond and eternal :  
And daily I kneel by the sea-shore,  
And holding my ear to the sea-shells,  
Pink-lipped and eternally singing,  
In echo, the sounds of the voices  
That mingle their melody o'er them.  
I catch, from their lips pink, singing,  
The prayer of my beautiful Ellen.

Then, looking away to the future,  
I see, on the rim of an ocean

More peaceful than placid Pacific,  
Out of Time in the country eternal —  
On the rim of the waters of crystal,  
Her hair in the hands of the breezes  
Of balm in the blisses of Heaven,  
Her soul brimming over with beauty  
And love that is *more* than eternal.  
And so I reach back in the distance,  
Regretting the shore I am leaving,  
And lean with a hope to the future,  
Rejoicing at what I am nearing. —  
Look back dim-eyed to a picture,  
A memory fond and eternal,  
Look on, with a hope, into Heaven,  
For a love that is *more* than eternal —  
Look back on the dead and a parting  
With memory fond and eternal —  
Ahead with the hope of a meeting  
With love that is *more* than eternal.

## A MEMORY.

O MOUNTS ! O moons ! O stars ! O trees !  
O skies ! O lakes ! O rushing streams !

O rough-hewn lands ! O rolling seas !

O wormwood dregs of broken dreams !

Why stir those winter wind-numbed bees

Of memory to set their stings

To torturing my wayward soul

And deafening with their din of wings ?

Why frown ? why smile ? why rush ? why  
roll ?

Why are these shoutings, whisperings,

Dead leaves of Falls and blooms of Springs

Forerunners up my wild weird way,

To wail unending in my ears,

When skies are clear, or dark, or gray,

That tender voice of early years,

And make me out of bitter tears

See, on the northeast shore of pine,

That child "*found floating* on the brine ? "

“THE CHILD OF WOE!”

SHE walks on the shore of a wintry night ;  
And her hands are thin, and her hair is  
white —

White with the snows that come below,  
And each flake, pitying, tries to light  
So tenderly over the “Child of Woe” —  
And yet, as they gather soft and slow,  
Clustering over her neck of snow,  
She shivereth under her scanty fold —  
Cold, so cold !

The world is white, and the sky is hid  
By tears that fall from under the lid  
Of clouds shut over the eye-like moon,  
As, frozen a frosty white, they glide  
Down the cheek of the sky, so soon  
To light and mingle them, cold as stone,  
With tears meandering, one by one,  
Over *her* face — O men with gold ! —  
Cold, so cold !

The clouds, o'erhanging, are white and chill  
As the snowy earth ; and, up on the hill,

The marble monuments, slim and tall,  
Lean up to the sky so pale and still ;

And her face is white as the snows that fall —  
And the drearest spot in her heart of all,  
Is where there trembles the cheerless wail,  
A word too sad for the world to hold,

*"Cold, so cold !"*

The snows crowd into her tattered shoe —  
No wonder her lips are thin and blue ! —

And blue ne'er symbolled a sweeter mind,  
Or a soul whose needle could dip more true

To Heaven than hers, or a heart more kind ;  
And still the eyes of the world are blind —  
And, O, here cometh a whirl of wind !

God, help her see through the flying fold  
Of snows, so cold !

How rise the drear and gathering drifts !  
And each, like a living ghost, uplifts

As though it reached for the cold embrace  
Of the upper drift, that wails and sifts  
Down chillingly into her whitened face !  
How fast it covers the latest trace  
Of her freezing feet, as, pace by pace,  
She strives on, hugging the scanty fold,  
Cold, so cold !

And no one offers a guiding hand  
To help her over the whitened sand,  
As fair lights out of the windows gleam  
Where all within is a tropic land—  
Ah ! would it a want of charity seem  
Should she, adrift with the snowy stream,  
Half-way think and half-way dream  
That the hearts and hands that have the gold  
Are cold, O ! cold ?

O, me ! what a homeless waif of woes !  
Sailing alone on a sea of snows,  
Her yearning voice so frail that none  
Will listen at all, and no one knows  
Its cry is meant for a signal gun !

So the strong go by her one by one —

No wonder then, as she tosses on,

She sighs, a-clutching her scanty fold,

*"The World is cold!"*

And, O! as she goes, will no one come

And make in his heart an inch of room?

And warm her cheek with a Christian tear?

And take her out of the snowy gloom? —

What a pitiful call for a bit of cheer!

O! how can a Christian help but hear?

Then send her to me, for, O! I fear

No one will know, till a snowy fold

Winds her — cold!

SO LOOK ABOVE.

*A HOLY stillness hovers in the air  
And bathes the soul in peaceful reverie ;  
Breathe low, nor speak, nor sigh, nor even dare  
To break the sweetened still with sounds of glee !*

*The very flowers their purest homage tend  
And kiss their fragrant incense to the sky.  
They look above, and drop and blend  
Their sinless tears where dying shadows lie.*

*The silver moon unveils her timid face  
Made mild with messages of speechless love —  
God's felt, but unseen, presence fills the place  
And melts the heart to prayer — so look above !*

FINIS.











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